

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----004210 232008Z /41

Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3475
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 03027

EXDIS

FOR WISNER AND HOUGHTON

NSC FOR BRZEZINSKI AND AARON

FROM DICK MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: TALKS WITH OWEN

SUMMARY. WE RESUMED OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH OWEN AND
COMPANY THIS MORNING, WITH LORD CARVER ABSENT FROM
BRITISH SIDE AND AMBASSADOR BREWSTER PRESENT ON OURS.
HAVING OUTLINED HIS OWN VIEWS YESTERDAY, OWEN WAS
CLEARLY INTERESTED IN HEARING OURS, WHICH I OUTLINED
AT SOME LENGTH AND IN DETAIL. I STRESSED IN PAR-

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TICULAR OUR CONCERN OVER A PRECIPITOUS EFFORT TO
PUSH NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS AND THE NEED TO MAINTAIN
OUR CONTACTS AND CREDIBILITY WITH PATRIOTIC FRONT AND
FRONT LINE. OWEN REGISTERED OBJECTIONS ON SEVERAL
ASPECTS OF MY ASSESSMENT ON HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED, AND
MEETING ENDED IN INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF HOW WE
SHOULD KEEP OUR LINES OPEN TO ALL THE PARTIES. WE ARE

SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH OWEN AGAIN AT 6:30 THIS
EVENING (FEB. 23). END SUMMARY

1. HAVING GIVEN US HIS OWN VIEWS ON NEXT STEPS YESTER-
DAY, OWEN OPENED THIS MORNING'S SESSION BY ASKING FOR
OUR THOUGHTS ON HOW WE MIGHT PROCEED. I TOOK OPPOR-
TUNITY TO POINT OUT AREAS WHERE OUR ASSESSMENT OF PRES-
ENT SITUATION DIFFERED FROM HIS.

-- WE ARE LESS SANGUINE THAN BRITISH APPEAR TO BE THAT
SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS A GOING CONCERN, ESPECIALLY
GIVEN NATURE OF UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS.

-- EVEN IF PRESENT HURDLE OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS IS
OVERCOME, IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN THAT TERMS OF AGREE-
MENT WILL BE FINALIZED OR IMPLEMENTED.

-- WE ARE FAR MORE DUBIOUS THAN UK ON PROSPECTS FOR
DRAWING NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS AND UN-
CERTAIN THAT SMITH, MUZOREWA OR SITHOLE REALLY WANT HIM
IN AT THIS STAGE.

-- WE ARE CONVINCED THAT REACTION OF FRONT LINE,
INCLUDING KAUNDA, TO EFFORT ON OUR PART TO PUSH NKOMO
IN WOULD BE STRONGLY NEGATIVE, RISKING OUR DECLINING
CREDIBILITY WITH THEM.

-- IN SUM, WE SEE GREAT UNCERTAINTIES AND GRAVE RISKS
WITH STRATEGY OWEN HAS SUGGESTED, PARTICULARLY HIS
DESIRE TO ACT URGENTLY WITH KAUNDA AND NKOMO.

2. HAVING SAID THIS, I THEN TOLD OWEN THAT WE SAW
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MERIT IN HIS EFFORTS TO STIFFEN SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA
TO EXTRACT BEST TERMS POSSIBLE FROM SMITH, LOOKING TO
EVENTUALITY THAT SALISBURY AGREEMENT MAY WELL BECOME A
REALITY. I ALSO AGREED THAT WE SHOULD KEEP OPTION OPEN
OF CREATING A PATH FOR NKOMO TO JOIN TALKS AT LATER
DATE, BUT AGAIN STRESSED OUR VIEW THAT IT IS PREMATURE
TO EMBARK ON SUCH A COURSE. WE ALSO SUGGESTED, AS LORD
CARVER HAD IN YESTERDAY'S DISCUSSION, THAT ESTABLISH-
MENT OF TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SALISBURY WOULD NOT
NECESSARILY FORECLOSE POSSIBILITIES OF BRINGING INTERNAL
AND EXTERNAL PARTIES BACK TOGETHER AND MIGHT IN FACT
ENHANCE THE PROSPECTS.

3. FINALLY I DREW ATTENTION TO WHAT IN OUR VIEW SEEMED
MAJOR FLAW IN OWEN'S PROPOSED STRATEGY, NAMELY THE
LACK OF ATTENTION TO THE FRONT LINE AND OTHER AFRICAN
STATES. I POINTED OUT THAT ONE PRINCIPAL VIRTUE OF
ANQLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS WAS THAT IT PROVIDED US WITH

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----004290 232014Z /42

Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3476
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
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FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING THE AFRICANS. IF, AS OWEN SUGGESTED, WE ARE NOW MOVING TO SITUATION WHERE OUR PROPOSALS WILL BE PLACED ON BACK BURNER, WE WILL HAVE TO DEVISE SOME NEW STRATEGY FOR KEEPING THE FRONT LINE ENGAGED IN A DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT. FAILING THIS, THEY WILL BE INCREASINGLY TEMPTED TO VIEW MILITARY OPTION, WITH ATTENDANT RELIANCE ON SOVIETS AND CUBANS, AS THEIR ONLY ALTERNATIVE FOR MAINTAINING PRESSURE ON SMITH AND ALSO FOR KEEPING OUR ATTENTION.

4. IN THIS REGARD, I TENTATIVELY SUGGESTED TO OWEN A POSSIBLE DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND OURSELVES, WITH UK TAKING LEAD (AS OWEN HAS ALREADY DONE) IN ATTEMPTING TO STIFFEN MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH SMITH, AND WITH US BEARING
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BRUNT OF CONTINUING OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE FRONT LINE.

I FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT MY GOING ON TO AFRICA TO MEET WITH ALL THE FRONT LINE AND NATIONALIST PARTIES PLUS SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT BE VIEWED IN THIS CONTEXT.

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY PRESENTATION, OWEN RAISED FOUR PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS. (A) ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AND HOW TO PROCEED IN GETTING NKOMO INTO THE SALISBURY TALKS, OWEN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CHANCES WERE NOT GOOD. NEVERTHELESS, OWEN WAS INSISTENT THAT EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE AND NOW. HE STRONGLY DOUBTED ARGUMENTS THAT NKOMO MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE TALKS AFTER INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS FORMED IN SALISBURY, BUT ADMITTED THAT HE WAS MINORITY OF ONE IN THIS VIEW WITHIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT IT COULD BE BOTH WASTEFUL AND RISKY TO SPEND OUR RESOURCES ON EFFORT TO BRING NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS IF FRONT LINE, PARTICULARLY KAUNDA, WERE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED. HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING, HE SAID, A DIRECT, FRONTAL APPROACH TO KAUNDA AND THE OTHER FRONT LINE ON THIS ISSUE BUT RATHER AN EFFORT, THROUGH "PRIVATE AND COMPLETELY DENIABLE CHANNELS," TO TEST WHETHER THERE WAS ANY WILLINGNESS ON KAUNDA'S PART TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION.

IF KAUNDA'S REACTION WAS TOTALLY NEGATIVE, OWEN IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD ABANDON THE IDEA.

B. ON THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS, OWEN OBJECTED TO OUR SUGGESTION THAT HE APPEARED TO BE BACKING AWAY FROM THEM. THE PROPOSALS, HE SAID, WOULD NOT BE WITHDRAWN AND HE WOULD CONTINUE TO STATE HMG REGARDS THE PROPOSALS AS THE "BEST" WAY TO SOLVE THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM.

(COMMENT: IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE OWEN HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN THIS LINE IN PUBLIC.) PRACTICALLY,

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HOWEVER, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF OUR PROPOSALS BEING ACCEPTED. THEREFORE OUR AIM SHOULD BE TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT LIES SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN OUR PROPOSALS AND THE TERMS BEING NEGOTIATED IN SALISBURY AND TO GET AS MANY OF THE PARTIES AS POSSIBLE SIGNED ON. HE STRESSED THAT IT WAS NOT HIS INTENTION TO SHIFT THE FOCUS OF OUR EFFORTS TO SALISBURY, WHICH WOULD AT THE VERY LEAST BE PREMATURE, AND HE HAD AVOIDED SUGGESTING THIS IN PUBLIC. RATHER THAN SUGGESTING THAT WE ATTEMPT TO BUILD ON THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT, THE LINE HE PREFERRED TO TAKE IS THAT WE SHOULD BUILD ON THE AREAS OF AGREEMENT.

C. ON MY SUGGESTED DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND OURSELVES (WHICH HE CLEARLY AND PERHAPS

WILLFULLY MISINTERPRETED), OWEN SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE VIEWED PUBLICLY AS AN END TO THE JOINT US-UK INITIATIVE. IT WOULD BE A MAJOR DECISION WHICH HE WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS PERSONALLY WITH SECRETARY VANCE. FOR ITS PART, BRITAIN WOULD MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH ALL PARTIES AND WOULD NOT AGREE TO DOWNGRADE ITS RELATIONS WITH ANY OF THEM. HE THOUGHT US WOULD BE FOOLISH TO OPT OUT OF ITS SIMILAR COMMITMENT TO DEALING WITH ALL PARTIES ON EQUAL BASIS SINCE WE WOULD BE SEEN TO BE LINING UP WITH THE FORCES OF VIOLENCE.

D. FINALLY, ON MY SUGGESTION TO GO ON ALONE TO AFRICA FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL THE VARIOUS PARTIES, OWEN STATED THAT IF A TRIP SEEMED DESIRABLE, IT SHOULD BE A JOINT UK-US EFFORT AND SHOULD INCLUDE CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES INCLUDING SMITH. HE WAS NOT PER-

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----004391 232016Z /42

Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3477
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SUADED, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH A TRIP WAS EITHER NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE.

6. I TOLD OWEN THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE OUR DIFFERENCES

WERE AS GREAT AS THEY MIGHT APPEAR. CLEARLY THE US WAS NOT BEING NEGATIVE ABOUT THE SALISBURY TALKS AND THIS WAS REFLECTED IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. (LONDON PAPERS ARE REPORTING PRESS SPOKESMAN COMMENT THAT SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS "SIGNIFICANT STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION," WITHOUT MENTIONING OUR CAREFULLY WRITTEN QUALIFYING PHRASE.) WITH REGARD TO OUR DEALINGS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES, WE WERE NOT SUGGESTING A PUBLIC DIVISION OF LABOR OR A PARTING OF THE WAYS BUT RATHER A RECOGNITION THAT EACH OF US WAS BETTER EQUIPPED TO PERFORM DIFFERENT TASKS. WE HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SHAPE DEVELOPMENTS IN

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SALISBURY BY STIFFENING MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE, BUT DO HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT ANY ATTEMPT TO GO BEYOND THIS LIMITED EFFORT TO MAKING APPROACHES TO KAUNDA AND NKOMO. FINALLY I CAME BACK TO OUR NEED TO CONTINUE OUR CONTACTS WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE FRONT LINE. PICKING UP ON JOHNNY GRAHAM'S SUGGESTION FOR TECHNICAL LEVELS MILITARY TALKS INVOLVING LORD CARVER AND PREM CHAND, I NOTED THAT THIS WOULD BE ONE WAY TO CONTINUE OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.

7. AFTER AN INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF HOW WE MIGHT HANDEL THE ACTUAL MECHANICS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES, WE AGREED TO CONSIDER THE ISSUES AT ANOTHER MEETING THIS EVENING AT 6:30.

8. COMMENT: OWEN WAS AGGRESSIVE IN DEFENDING HIS OWN PROPOSED STRATEGY AND IN RAISING OBJECTIONS (SOME OF THEM ARTIFICIAL) TO MY PRESENTATION. DESPITE THIS, I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE FELT VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE. HIS OWN ADMISSION THAT HIS VIEWS ARE NOT SHARED BY HIS COLLEAGUES, E.G. ON SUCH KEY POINTS AS THE TIMELINESS OF AN EFFORT TO MOVE NKOMO INTO THE INTERNAL TALKS, TENDS TO SUPPORT THIS. MANY OF THE COMMENTS HE OFFERED TODAY AS EXPLANATIONS OR ELABORATIONS OF THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED YESTERDAY ACTUALLY CAME THROUGH AS RETRACTIONS, AT LEAST PARTIAL ONES. AS A RESULT, WE MAY NOT BE SO FAR APART ON THE BASIC OUTLINES OF A STRATEGY AS IT INITIALLY SEEMED. NEVERTHELESS, THERE REMAINS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US THAT WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED, PARTICULARLY ON THE ACTUAL MECHANICS OF MAINTAINING OUR CONTACTS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES.

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A SEPARATE TALK I HAD WITH TED ROWLANDS AND TOM MCNALLY, CALLAGHAN'S POLITICAL ADVISOR, AFTER THIS MORNING'S SESSION HAS REINFORCED MY IMPRESSION THAT OWEN'S VIEWS MAY NOT BE GENERALLY SHARED THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT. MCNALLY, WHO HAS A LONG ACQUAINTANCE WITH AND KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICA, GAVE THE STRONG IMPRESSION OF SHARING SOME OF OUR DEEP RESERVATIONS ABOUT OWEN'S PROPOSED COURSE. I DID NOT WISH TO DRAW MCNALLY OUT TOO EXPLICITLY FOR FEAR OF BEING ACCUSED BY OWEN OF ATTEMPTING AN END RUN AROUND HIM TO CALLAGHAN. HOPEFULLY WE WILL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHERE HMG'S TRUE SENTIMENTS LIE WHEN WE MEET AGAIN THIS EVENING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780084-0723
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780223/aaaaatbx.tel
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3507838
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA: TALKS WITH OWEN SUMMARY. WE RESUMED OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH OWEN AND COMPANY THIS MORNING, WITH LORD CARVER ABSENT FROM
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK, US, (OWEN, DAVID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/03619ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014